



BOROUGH OF BEWDLEY.

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**ANNUAL REPORT**

OF

**MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.**

FOR

1925.

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BEWDLEY :

H. G. PERKINS, PRINTER, BEWDLEY.



BEWDLEY,

APRIL 28th, 1926.

## To the Town Council of Bewdley.

GENTLEMEN,

My Report for the year 1925 is a Survey Report, as defined by the Ministry of Health, and is drawn up in accordance with the instructions issued to me. It is therefore somewhat fuller than the reports of the last four years, but, owing to the smallness of the District, and the few changes which have taken place in the past five years, the difference is not very marked.

*Natural and  
Social Con-  
ditions of the  
Area.*

The Area of the District (including water) is 2,105 acres.

The District consists of a small and very ancient town, built on the West bank of the River Severn, where the houses are very old, with others scattered on the surrounding hills.

The Population was 2,758 at the Census of 1921, and is now estimated by the Registrar General as 2,606.

The number of Inhabited Houses (1921), 663.

The number of Families or Separate Occupiers (1921), 660.

The Rateable Value, £9,377 7s. 6d.

The sum represented by a Penny Rate, £29 2s. 6d.

A very large proportion of the inhabitants work in the Carpet and other Factories in Kidderminster, which is three miles distant, to which they go by train or road, there being a good service of Motor Omnibuses in the morning and evening, but many go by cycle or on foot, to the great benefit of their health.

A good many men and lads work in the coal pits of the Highley Mining Co., which are about eight miles distant, to which they chiefly go by train.

In the Town itself there are a Brass Foundry, a Tan Yard, a Brewery and a Mineral Water Factory, but they employ only a few persons.

Agriculture and Timber Work employ a good many people, and many of the women and children add to their incomes by picking peas, blackberries and hops in their seasons.

On the whole the wages are low, and the people are unable to pay any but very moderate rents for their houses, consequently it is almost impossible to build houses for the working classes at an economic rent.

| <i>Vital<br/>Statistics.</i> | Births belonging<br>to the District |       |       |         | Rate per 1,000<br>of the Population |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|-------------------------------------|
|                              |                                     | Total | Males | Females |                                     |
|                              | Legitimate                          | 38    | 19    | 19      | 15·7                                |
|                              | Illegitimate                        | 3     | 1     | 2       |                                     |
|                              |                                     | —     | —     | —       |                                     |
|                              |                                     | 41    | 20    | 21      |                                     |
|                              |                                     | —     | —     | —       |                                     |
|                              | Deaths belonging<br>to the District |       |       |         | Rate per 1,000<br>of the Population |
|                              |                                     | 37    | 19    | 18      | 14·1                                |

It will be noticed that there were only four more births in the District than there were deaths, and that the birth rate was only 15·7 per 1,000 of the population, which is the lowest rate of which I have any record, the nearest being 17·36 in the year 1919, the year after the termination of the Great War. The birth rate for the whole of England and Wales for 1925 was 18·3 per 1,000.

I consider that this low birth rate is to a great extent due to the shortage of houses suitable for young married couples to live in, in consequence of which they either have to leave the district or live with their parents, with the result that many are reluctant to have children, the houses being already as full as they should be, if not more so.

Of the deaths registered as belonging to the District there were :

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Under 1 year               | 4     |
| Between 1 year and 5 years | 2     |
| „ 5 years and 15 „         | 1     |
| „ 15 „ „ 25 „              | None  |
| „ 25 „ „ 65 „              | 16    |
| Over 65 years              | 14    |
|                            | <hr/> |
|                            | 37    |
|                            | <hr/> |

There were 4 deaths of Infants under 1 year of age, giving a rate of 97 per 1,000 children born.

The death rate for the whole of England and Wales was 12·2 per 1,000 of the population, and the Infant Mortality rate 75 per 1,000 children born.

*Hospitals.* There are no Hospitals in the District itself. Tuberculosis cases are provided for by the County Council, Scarlet Fever and Smallpox by agreement with the Kidderminster Borough, three miles away; Children and general cases by the Kidderminster and District General Hospital; and Poor Law cases by the Kidderminster Union Infirmary.

There is no Maternity Hospital available.

*Ambulance Facilities.* Infectious cases can be removed by the Ambulance belonging to the Kidderminster Fever Hospital, and non-infectious and accident cases by a Red Cross Ambulance, which can be obtained from Kidderminster in a few minutes.

*Clinics and Treatment Centres.* The district is not large enough to require these, but those at Kidderminster are easily accessible.

*Public Health Officers of the Local Authority.* There is a part time Medical Officer of Health, and a whole time Sanitary Inspector and Borough Surveyor, both of whose salaries are contributed to under the Public Health Acts.

*Nurses.* There is a District Nurse, working under a Ladies' Committee, for home nursing, who is subsidised by the County Council for inspection of Babies, School Children, and Tuberculous Cases under the supervision of the County Medical Officer, and by the Kidderminster Guardians for the care of Pauper cases. This Nurse is not allowed to attend Midwifery cases.

There are two Midwives practising privately in the district, under the supervision of the County Medical Officer.

*Clinical Work.* Examinations of Pathological specimens are made, free of charge, by the County Analyst, of which convenience considerable advantage is taken by the Medical Practitioners in the district.

Diphtheria and Anthrax Serum are provided free of charge by the Local Authority.

*Legislation in Force.* There are local Bye-laws in force, dated 1886, relating to Cowsheds and Dairies, and to Slaughter-houses.

These places are regularly inspected, and kept in a fairly satisfactory condition.

*Water.* The district has its own Water supply, obtained from a deep well and bore hole in the new red sandstone, situated in the Parish of Wribbenhall, from which it is pumped to two reservoirs, one for the higher and one for the lower part of the district.

The supply is constant and of first-rate quality, and practically inexhaustible in quantity.

The Urban District of Stourport and the Parish of Wribbenhall are supplied from the same source.

There is no possibility of contamination of the supply.

*Rivers and Streams.* The Sewage of the district is discharged in a crude state into the River Severn, but the volume of sewage is so small in comparison with the size of the river, and the current runs so swiftly over extensive beds of sand and gravel immediately below the town, that no serious contamination is produced.

*Closet  
Accommoda-  
tion.*

There are now 364 Water Closets, 87 Pail Closets, and 128 Middens in the district, as compared with 348, 85, and 132 respectively in the year 1920. It will be seen that the old Middens are gradually being displaced in favour of more sanitary accommodation.

*Scavenging.*

The Scavenging is done by the Corporation workmen, the house refuse being deposited on a piece of waste land near the town, and the nightsoil removed to a distant farm and used as manure.

*Sanitary  
Inspection of  
the Area.*

During the year the Sanitary Inspector made 421 visits of inspection; 47 Preliminary and 15 Statutory notices were served, as a result of which a certain amount of improvement has been made in some of the premises.

*Schools.*

The Public Elementary Schools are in a very satisfactory condition, and the water supply is plentiful.

The Infants' Playground at the Lax Lane school has been taken up and re-laid.

*Housing.  
(1) General  
housing con-  
ditions in  
the Area.*

In my Report for the year 1919 I wrote as follows:—"A survey of the district was made by the Sanitary Inspector and myself in October, 1919, in the course of which we visited 212 houses, and a report was made by the Council to the Housing Commissioner.

We estimated that there was a deficit of 92 houses for the working classes,

There is a very considerable amount of overcrowding, largely due to the fact that young married couples are unable to find houses for themselves, and have to continue to live with their parents.

It is impossible to deal with these cases, as no alternative accommodation can be found.

The general standard of the housing in the district is very low. The houses are nearly all very old, and of recent years, partly no doubt owing to shortage of labour, the repairs which are continually necessary in this class of houses have not been properly carried out.

The general character of the defects are (1) dampness, due to defective roofs and spouting, and in many instances to the soil being against the back or side walls ; (2) lack of proper ventilation owing to windows being small or unable to be opened ; (3) lack of proper sanitary conveniences ; and (4) defective paving.

No closing orders can be made, for the same reason that overcrowding cannot be dealt with, namely, that no alternative accommodation can be found for the present inhabitants.

It is to be hoped that the Council will press forward its Building Scheme with more vigour than it has hitherto done, as until new houses are erected very little can be done to remedy the truly appalling condition of the housing of the Borough."

Since that time a few houses have been built by different people for their own or their servants' occupation, and a good deal of repair work has been done on some of the old property, to its great improvement, but nothing has been done by the Council to remedy the state of affairs then existing.

The building scheme which the Council had in hand at that time fell through, but a Committee has recently been appointed by the Council to enquire again into the whole subject.

The chief difficulty in any Housing Scheme is the question of a site. All the level ground in the district is already occupied, except such as would be liable to be flooded by the river, and though excellent building sites could be found on the higher ground, these would be very expensive to build on owing to the high cost of hauling materials.

They would also be remote from the railway station, which is some distance on the other side of the Severn, and the omnibus terminus which is in the centre of the town.

This is a serious consideration, as so many of the inhabitants go to their work by train or omnibus. It has been suggested that the Council should acquire some of the dilapidated property already

existing, which could then be demolished and the sites used for rebuilding, but that course, though possibly desirable, is impossible as long as there is nowhere for the present inhabitants to go to during the process of rebuilding.

There is ample ground suitable for building sites on the East side of the Severn, in close proximity to the Station and the Omnibus route, and on level ground, but the Council is naturally unwilling to build outside its own area, of which the river is the boundary.

(2) *Bye-laws.* The old Building Bye-laws have been revoked, and no new ones yet adopted.

*Housing  
Statistics  
for the year  
1925.*

Number of new houses erected during the year :—

(a) Total ... .. 7

(b) With State assistance under the Housing Acts :—

(i) By the Local Authority ... Nil.

(ii) By other persons ... 7

(1) Unfit dwelling houses :

Inspection (1) Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts) ... .. 48

(2) Number of dwelling houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing Regulations 1910, or the Housing Consolidated Regulations 1925 ... .. 31

(3) Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation ... .. 4

(4) Number of dwelling houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation ... .. 15

2. Remedy of defects without service of formal notices.

Number of defective dwelling houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers ... 10

## 3. Action under Statutory Powers.

A. Proceedings under Section 3 of the Housing Act, 1925                      ...                      Nil.

## B. Proceedings under Public Health Acts.

Two wooden erections were closed as being unfit for human habitation.

C. Proceedings under Sections 11, 14 & 15 of the Housing Act, 1925.

(1) Number of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders    1

(2) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made    Nil.

*Milk Supply.*            The Milk supply of the district is in the hands of several small Dairymen, who distribute direct to the consumers, and very little is stored.

The Cowsheds are not all kept in as satisfactory a condition as could be desired, but there is a general improvement on the whole in this respect.

One Licence for Grade A and certified milk has been granted by the County Council.

*Meat.*                    There are only two Slaughter Houses in the district, both private; one is registered and the other licensed, being the same as in 1920.

They are regularly inspected by the Sanitary Inspector, as also is the Meat Shops, &c., under the Public Health (Meat) Regulations, 1924, and are in a fairly satisfactory condition.

*Other Foods.*            23 Tins of Preserved Food were surrendered and destroyed under the Sale of Food and Drugs Acts.

The following have been notified during the year :—

| <i>Infectious Diseases.</i> | Disease.                | Total Cases Notified. | Cases admitted to Hospital. | Tot'l Deaths |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
|                             | Scarlet Fever           | 3                     | —                           | 1            |
|                             | Diphtheria              | 5                     | —                           | —            |
|                             | Puerperal Fever         | 2                     | 2                           | 1            |
|                             | Pneumonia               | 1                     | —                           | 1            |
|                             | Encephalitis Lethargica | 1                     | —                           | —            |
|                             | Erysipelas              | 2                     | —                           | —            |

There was a considerable outbreak of Influenza in the first two quarters of the year, two deaths being attributed to the disease. There were also outbreaks of Mumps, Measles, and Whooping Cough during the same periods, and in July.

The Infant Departments at Wyre Hill and Lax Lane Schools were closed from March 10th to March 23rd, and all departments were closed from July 3rd to July 27th.

There were two deaths due to Whooping Cough.

During the five years since 1920 there have been 26 cases of Scarlet Fever, 3 of Puerperal Fever, 6 of Pneumonia, 5 of Diphtheria, and 1 of Encephalitis Lethargica.

All the cases of Scarlet Fever have been satisfactorily isolated in their own homes, as also have the cases of Diphtheria.

Diphtheria Antitoxin is provided, free of charge, by the Council, and has been used with satisfactory results in each case that has been notified.

All premises where notifiable infectious disease has occurred are disinfected by the Sanitary Inspector.

## New Cases and Mortality during 1925.

| <i>Tuberculosis</i> | Age<br>periods | NEW CASES. |    |              |    | DEATHS.   |    |             |    |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|----|--------------|----|-----------|----|-------------|----|
|                     |                | Pulmonary  |    | Non-Pulmon'y |    | Pulmonary |    | NonPulmon'y |    |
|                     |                | M.         | F. | M.           | F. | M.        | F. | M.          | F. |
|                     | 0              |            |    |              |    |           |    |             |    |
|                     | 1              |            |    |              |    |           |    |             |    |
|                     | 5              |            |    | 1            |    |           |    |             |    |
|                     | 10             | 1          |    |              |    |           |    |             |    |
|                     | 15             |            |    |              | 1  |           |    |             |    |
|                     | 20             |            |    |              |    |           |    |             |    |
|                     | 25             | 2          |    |              |    |           |    |             |    |
|                     | 35             |            | 1  |              |    |           |    |             |    |
|                     | 45             | 1          |    |              |    | 2         |    |             |    |
|                     | 55             |            |    |              |    |           |    |             |    |
|                     | 65             |            | 1  |              |    |           | 1  |             |    |
|                     | and upwards    |            |    |              |    |           |    |             |    |

I believe that all definitely recognised cases of Tuberculosis in the Area are notified.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

U. W. N. MILES,

Medical Officer of Health







